

This bill also provides direct support to local government, cities, and counties directly who have not benefited from their States directly. This is critically important to small communities and large communities all across this Nation.

Finally, the American Rescue Plan supports our small businesses and our frontline workers in our minority communities. In this bill, we expand PPP eligibility and we provide critical resources to our frontline healthcare workers, transit workers, and teachers.

□ 1100

Mr. Speaker, economists and healthcare experts agree, if we do not take bold action now, we will have more deaths later and risk an economic downturn.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking my colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to listen to President Biden's call for bipartisanship and pass this bill.

I am reminded during this Black History Month of the powerful words of Dr. Martin Luther King, who said, "We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

Mr. Speaker, let's pass this package so that we can begin to Build Back Better and reassure our constituents that help is indeed on the way.

FUND LOCAL AND STATE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, the House is expected to vote on a \$1.9 trillion spending bill that the majority claims will help fight the COVID-19 crisis. Despite this massive price tag, less than one-half of 1 percent of those dollars in this bill will go to fund a local and State public health workforce.

As a former director of the Iowa Department of Public Health, I have seen firsthand the great work our local public health departments do, and I know how necessary they are in this fight against COVID-19. It is unthinkable to me that any so-called COVID relief bill will dedicate such a miniscule portion of its funding to local public health departments, the same departments that are in our community, with us every day, working around the clock to defeat this pandemic. In contrast, FEMA is allocated \$50 billion, and they have no medical personnel to dispense vaccines.

Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about defeating this virus, I urge my colleagues to prioritize our public health officials and those on the frontline against COVID-19, instead of directing billions of dollars to programs and initiatives unrelated to this crisis.

This funding should go as a pass-through to the CDC and directly to

noncompetitive, local public health grants.

In our 99 counties in Iowa, local public health officials are intelligent, experienced, and capable to dispense vaccines in a rapid and efficient process. They have proven their capabilities by setting up drive-through clinics for flu vaccines, and also in the H1N1 pandemic as well. And given their preparedness training, they have worked with our local emergency management associates to do drive-through testing. These are the same nurses and individuals who live in your communities and who have vaccinated your children and have been the source of information and calm and support throughout this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, let's work together to defeat this virus by supporting our State and local public health teams by getting them the funding they need directly to them at the community level through noncompetitive, local public health grants. Acknowledging the tremendous work that our local public health workforce does on a daily basis and funding their efforts will defeat this virus and get America back on its feet.

AMERICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, none of us can rise to the floor of the House and talk about the cruciality of the American Rescue package and the absolute imperative nature of this particular legislation passing without acknowledging 500,000 lives—not numbers, but names of mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles and cousins, sisters and brothers, just plain good friends, and loved ones that extend beyond one's family. And then for the love of this country, just our fellow Americans.

Mr. Speaker, these are hardworking people, many of them essential workers on the front lines. Unfortunately, with the horrific and insulting effort that was made by the last administration, essential workers were out and about in grocery stores and delivery trucks, first responders, and no one attempted to stop the community spread. We had no testing protocol, and it was in my Congressional district that I worked with United Memorial Hospital to ensure that we had testing sites and opened the first testing site in my Congressional district to reach hard-to-serve areas on March 19.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, we have done 55 with UMMC, a small hospital that I call, "the little red engine that can." But that was all done by the energy and determination in a city that was clearly one of the hotspots as part of the State of Texas, complete inertia by our leadership until we began to see the high numbers of loss of life in the African-American and Latinx community.

Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor today to reinforce my continued and emphatic support for the American Rescue Plan, because I don't see the 500,000 lives as just numbers, I see them as persons who are in need.

This plan will mount a national vaccination program that includes setting up community vaccination sites nationwide. It will also take complementary measures to combat the virus, including scaling up testing and tracing, addressing shortages of personal protective equipment—a real fight against COVID-19 and all of its variants, including the UK, South Africa, and one that is just starting up. It delivers immediate relief to working families. It will give the \$1,400—that will make it \$2,000, increase in the minimum wage as well, and continued unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, let me cite the city of Houston, that we have lost jobs in 9 key service sectors:

Healthcare, 391,000 jobs lost; retail, 303,600 jobs lost; food services, 267,000 jobs lost; finance, 166,000; private education, 63,000; art and entertainment 37,000-plus; accommodations, \$28,000; air transportation, \$20,200.

One of the reasons my motion passed in the Budget Committee to ensure the protection of the public funding where Harris County will receive \$141 billion plus. The city of Houston will receive \$141 billion plus, because we are desperate to provide these dollars for our public resources, our municipal workers, our healthcare workers, our firefighters, our paramedics, our law enforcement, police. We are all in need to continue this fight. We need this money to support struggling communities, as indicated with the loss of jobs in Houston and Harris County.

Mr. Speaker, the plan will provide crucial support for the hardest hit small businesses, and I am glad we have worked to target these small businesses, especially those owned by entrepreneurs from racial and ethnic backgrounds that experienced systemic discrimination, along with EIDL grants that my faith communities and nonprofits are asking about, and as well, the expanded eligibility for those entities and resources for jobs, to protect the jobs of first responders, as I indicated.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: We are hard hit. If we do not pass the American Rescue Plan, which I intend to support enthusiastically, we will end up with 4 million fewer jobs. It will take us more than a year to return to full employment. We will lower the lifetime earnings of our young generation. Millions of parents, particularly mothers—women have been hurt by this even more—will be forced to stay at home, and another 4 years of suffering before real returns come.

Mr. Speaker, we had to experience this, but we are not going to continue to experience it. Let's support the American Rescue Plan as the Biden administration has asked us to do.